(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) There is no such proposal under consideration.

Customs Clearance for Cargo at Hyderabad

2406. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that facilities like storage accommodation, security and handling equipment were available at Hyderabad airport for importing air cargo;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Collector of Customs and Central Excise, Hyderabad recommended to the Central Board of Customs and Central Excise that the Hyderabad Collectorate undertakes the clearance of general import cargo;

(c) whether it is a fact that the trade circles have been representing the matter for nearly three years to sanction customs clearance of the general import air cargo at Hyderabad;

(d) whether it is a fact that the clearance of import cargo facility will not only mean optimum utilisation of the cargo air terminal complex at Hyderabad and fuller utilisation of the carrying capacity of the Indian Airlines and Air India but also the fulfilment of the long felt need of the importers; and

(e) what are the reasons for not according the required sanction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (e) Hyderabad airport has been notified as a customs airport for import of certain specified items. Representations have been received from the trade for permitting the import of all general cargo through Hyderabad airport. The Andhra Pradesh State Trading Corporation which is running the aircargo complex at Hyderabad has acquired more space for handling import cargo. The Collector of Customs and Central Excise, Hyderabad recommended the request but has sought sanction of additional staff for handling the extra workload. Government is considering allowing more items which are immediately required by the local trade and industry and Collector of Customs and Central Excise has been asked to identify these items in consultation with the local trade and industry. He has also been asked to get the existing central excise staff trained in a major custom house for handling customs work pending sanction of the additional staff required by him and to make infrastructural arrangements for starting increased import cargo clearance work at short notice in consultation with the other Government agencies concerned.

Drying up of Cherrapunji Area in Meghalaya

2407. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Cherrapunji, the wettest place on earth, is slowly drying up for lack of vegetation;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the area is gradually becoming barren;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the 'Jhum' cultivation practiced by the hill tribals of the North-East has led to large-scale destruction of trees and thereby added to the problem of drying up of the soil; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) and (b) Large scale denudation of forests is one of the reasons for water scarcity in the area during dry season. The soil fertility is adversely affected due to this reason.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Following steps have been taken by the Government to check ecological degradation:

(1) A project of Ecological Restoration of Cherrapunji is under implementation since 1984. The project components are creation of nursery with indigenous species, plantation in the most difficult or refractory areas, creation of windbreak shelters, avenue or roadside plantation and establishment of green block. Rs. 310.60 lakhs were allocated for five years, 1984—89.

(2) Suitable technique of planting in the extremely heavy rainfall area and refractory sites has been identified. As a follow up action, afforestation under the State Scheme has been taken up as block plantation and along the road sides.

(3) Guidelines were issued to State Governments:

(i) to avoid clear felling of natural forests and where such fellings are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to areas not exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains;

(ii) to consider banning of fellings in the hills above 1000 meters at least for some years; and

(iii) to identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.

(4) The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, is implemented strictly to check diversion of forest land to non-forest purposes.

(5) Meghalaya is one of the States which is getting assistance under the Central Sector Scheme for control of shifting (jhumming) cultivation taken up in the Seventh Five Year Plan with an allocation of Rs. 45.5 crores.

Amendment of Direct Tax Laws

2408. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce the Direct Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill during the current Session of Parliament; and

(b) whether Government propose to direct the Department of Revenue to issue a public notification at an early date in accordance with the statement of the Minister of State for Revenue in Parliament on September 5th to the effect that the tax payers could take into account the effect of incentives and concessions announced in the last Budget Session?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of answer to part (a) above.

Deemed Exports Schemes

2409. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the salient features of the "Deemed Export Scheme" and its cope of application to the foreign and